

# SAY A GOOD WORD FOR AGRICULTURE

**Why Farming Needs a Real Job Of Public Relations — Some Basic Facts On The Real Greatness Of The American Farmer.**

If you are planning to be around for a while, say until the century's end, less than four decades from now, I'll be greatly obliged if you'll do me something of a favor. Will you check on what is being written and said then, around the year 2000? Will you keep an eye on the press and television and give radio a sufficiently attentive ear to make sure whether farming and farmers are, finally, given the great credit they have earned? That's what I want to know — whether, at long, long last the American public finally awakened to what a magnificent job the farming people of the country were doing to keep a population of more than 180 million people extremely well fed.

## SOMETHING TO DO ABOUT IT

Meantime, while you keep an eye and an ear on the situation, there's something you can do about it. Something "we" can do, if you'll let me labor alongside you. This "something" is the most neglected fact in farming. It's simply "saying a good word for agriculture" — saying it, loud and clear, wherever and whenever we can. Industry and organized labor call this "saying a good word" public relations. It includes anything, from keeping lobbyists in Washington to carrying a favorable news item to a local editor. It includes advertising of many kinds and, quite as necessary, a willingness to speak up at the right time and place.

## A LOOK AT THE PICTURE

Since farm people make up less than 10 per cent of the nation's population total, it's important to know what the other 90 per cent think. Once almost all Americans were farmers. They lived on the soil, produced their food and contrived their clothing. But that didn't last long. Soon there were "butchers and bakers and candlestick makers" and a lot else. People went to town, leaving a smaller and smaller percentage of the population on farms. By 1930 only about one-fourth of us were producers of food and fiber.

About this time the production revolution struck Agriculture, speeding up the trek to town. Now only one of each eleven Americans is a food producer. By 1975, very probably, only one out of twenty will be on the land — nineteen of each twenty in the city! Even now fewer than ten million of us are farmers; more than one hundred and seventy million of us aren't. No reason to wonder at the spread of the idea of agriculture as a *decadent industry*.

## SOMETIME: ONE MILLION TOP FARMERS

Sit in a cityman's chair. Watch the parade of statistics testifying to the continuing decline in the number of farms in the United States. So recently as 1940 there were six million — large, small and in between; good, bad and indifferent. Now there are fewer than four million, less than two-thirds as many. And economists assert we may one day have as few as two million farms and one million of them will produce 90% of our food and fiber. The city man hears this small angle of the story, reads of the dwindling number of farms and concludes, all too frequently, that Uncle Sam is just about out of the farming business.

## WHAT A STORY!

Farming going out of business? Hardly. It has assets of more than \$208 billion. That's billions! Of this total, \$128,200,000,000 is in farm real estate. Agriculture's gross income in 1960 was more than \$45,000,000,000. Farmers spend around \$40 billion annually. Whatever business Mr. Cityman is in, that \$40 billion is important to him. It is vital in keeping the national economy right side up. Of the \$40 billion, about twenty-five are spent in producing the nation's food and fiber; fifteen for living. Merchants have a keen appreciation of such buying power as that.

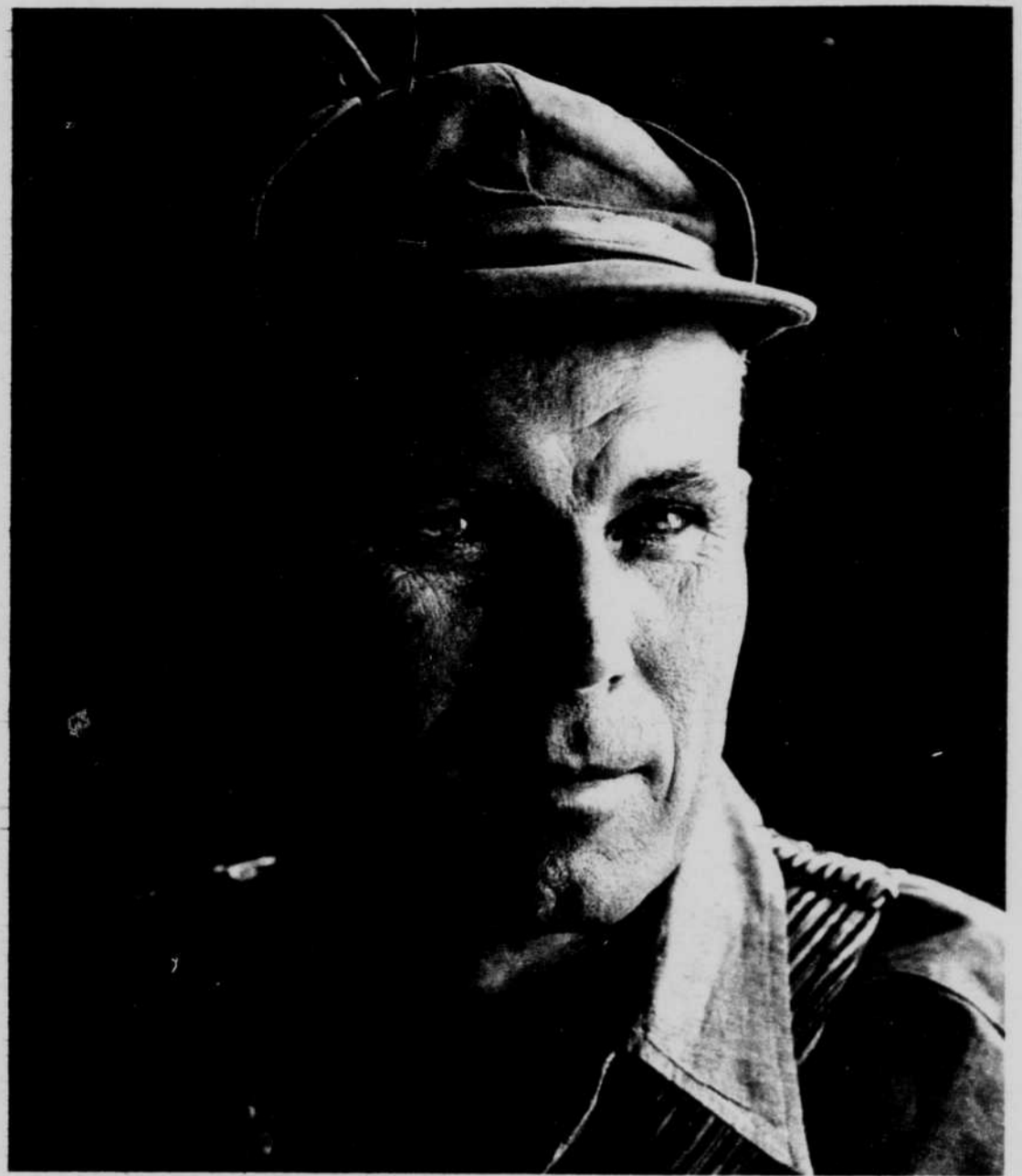
## THE ANSWER IS EFFICIENCY

Total farm production in 1960 set a new high record. Never before have American farms turned out so vast a harvest. That's despite fewer farms and fewer farmers. In fact, in no place on earth in all history have so few men produced so much. Efficiency! Production per man and per man hour is beyond the comprehension of anyone a short decade ago. Yet we permit such a record to be accepted as casual, almost commonplace. It isn't — not by a very long shot. But we have not let people know what a spectacularly wonderful record it is. One item: After a very slow spring in 1960, when another kind of men might have despaired of ever getting a corn crop in, a total of 82,117,000 acres was harvested. In 1944 we put in 10 million acres more but the 1960 crop was 40 per cent bigger than that cribbed 16 years earlier. Efficient production.

## CLEAREST PICTURE OF ALL

Consumers can understand the relative low cost of the "food market basket" — the government's estimate of the food needs of a family of five for a month. You can figure that out in terms of your own household. Have a look at this:

Back in 1920, forty years ago, the average factory worker spent the earnings from 120 hours for food for his family for a month.



By 1930 he had to put in only 91 hours to pay for a month's food bill. Very good. By 1940 food was really low in cost, in terms of labor, for a month's food expense required wages from only 57 hours. That's quite wonderful. You'll go a long way trying to find another country where food consumers "have it so good." But the past twenty years have made the food picture even brighter for city people — for everyone who eats! Government data for 1960, the latest, reveal this extraordinary fact: The average city worker can now use the income from only 39 hours of work to pay his family food bill for a month! Groceries and meat and milk — all food — for a month in exchange for the income from 39 hours' work. For the day's food, less than 1½ hours of labor — about 78 minutes!

No place else in all the world does food cost so little, in terms of wages — an impossible situation except for our remarkably abundant production of food. That is, except for the very wonderful contribution by the farmers of our country. When we in America fully realize the basic national asset enjoyed in our agriculture, we will acclaim the farmer from our housetops — we will rise up and call him blessed.

At about this point it may appear logical to call for a big promotion campaign for agriculture — even for a government program. Certainly the subject warrants whatever may be required to waken public consciousness to a realization of the country's great good fortune in its farm resources. But let's start this effort here at home, with the farmer himself, the businessmen who serve and help him, the rest of us whose future is in Rural America. Let's ALL of us speak up for Agriculture, anywhere, anytime. There could hardly be a more pleasant assignment than that — certainly no other institution is more deserving — no other has waited longer.

So, I'll be greatly obliged if you'll do me something of a favor. Watch, to see when Agriculture begins "to come into its own" with the public. Watch for proof, in press and radio and television, that the importance of the farmer is recognized. In the meantime, don't neglect, you, yourself, to "say a good word for Agriculture."

## ... about the author

Many of you have known Lloyd Burlingham over the years as a farm news commentator and will need no introduction to the writer of this article. You will recognize the sincerity, the good common sense, the easy prose style and the great love for agriculture which characterize this man. For those not as well acquainted, here are a few facts about him. His appearance is shown by the picture at the right. In spite of long hours and hard work in radio and TV, Lloyd bears his years lightly. He has always maintained an essential humanity and sense of humor which have sustained him well.

Farm raised in Linn County, Iowa, he attended Iowa State College and University of Missouri. He has operated farms (still does), written for and published farm magazines, managed the National Dairy Exposition, broadcast for many years on behalf of many of the biggest names in agriculture. Probably no one in this country is better qualified to speak up for the farmer.

